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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0004
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RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0272
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3845
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1682
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8690
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6924
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4986
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3055
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4945
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4051
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9313
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6619
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1152
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3536
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#) [ECON](#)
SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 76

REF: A) Colombo 539 B) Colombo 535 C) Colombo 533 D) Colombo 529 E)
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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: President Rajapaksa gave a victory speech to Parliament on the morning of May 19. While he discussed redevelopment of the North and political reform in broad terms, the speech was far from the olive branch to the Tamil people many had hoped it would be. It was defensively belligerent toward the international community. The Government released what it purported to be evidence it had Prabhakaran's body, but doubts swirled about the official account of his death. An LTTE spokesman claimed Prabhakaran was still alive, but offered no details or evidence. The military has essentially finished operations in the former conflict zone. UN SYG Chief of Staff Nambiar was expected to visit the zone, but weather delayed the flight until May 20. The ICRC hoped to accompany him. The GSL denied a request by ICRC to assist with wounded civilians and identify the dead. Suspected LTTE cadres were being arrested before the checkpoint at Omanthai. The total number of IDPs has now reached about 300,000, and there are disagreements arising between GSL and the UN and other NGOs about rules on access to camps. No solid information has emerged about the number of casualties from the last several days of fighting. "Spontaneous" victory celebrations in Colombo and elsewhere have been largely peaceful, although some damage was caused at the British High Commission during a protest there May 18. END SUMMARY.

RAJAPAKSA'S SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT

¶2. (SBU) President Rajapaksa addressed the Sri Lankan Parliament the morning of May 19. Although he began the speech with a short statement in Tamil, the speech went on from there to strike a tone that differed little from the nationalistic approach used by the GSL over the last weeks of the war, and offering little in the way of a reconciliatory message to the average Tamil citizen.

¶3. (SBU) The President said the Tamil community has been reduced to its lowest ebb by the terrorism of the LTTE, and the Tamil Diaspora which assisted the LTTE before must no longer do so. He said the defeat of the LTTE is actually a victory for the Tamils, and that in fact the Tamil people gained nothing from the LTTE's years of violence. The President stated that military victory over the LTTE was not the final victory for Sri Lanka, and that development was the next step.

¶4. (SBU) President Rajapaksa acknowledged the recent high level of scrutiny from the international community, but said Sri Lanka had listened to others, but had not always done everything they asked. He criticized foreign countries who called for better treatment of Tamils, saying that in fact Sri Lanka had been caring for and sustaining all of its people throughout the many years of LTTE terrorism. He said Sri Lanka did not need the advice of others on how to care for its own people, and would not be subject to foreign "experiments" to solve internal political problems. He called on

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international actors to provide economic aid and cooperation without any advice attached. He also invited expatriate Sri Lankans with professional skills to return to help develop the country.

¶5. (SBU) The President went on to say the GSL was committed to establishing democratic practices and finding political solutions. He stated there are no more minorities in Sri Lanka, ethnic or otherwise, only patriots, and then a few others who do not love their country. He said this victory had been gained by the brave troops who sacrificed their life and limb, and the country would not let that be plundered or sacrificed. This victory was for those who rally around the national flag.

PRABHAKARAN

¶6. (SBU) The Government released what they claimed to be photos of Prabhakaran's body, and stated they had completed DNA testing which confirmed the body was his. It was unclear what DNA samples they were using to compare with the body. There is suspicion among various sources in Colombo about the Government's account of Prabhakaran's death, and the condition of the body shown on television did not seem to follow the account that he had suffered burns to his face during a final firefight. This does not mean he is alive, but it may be difficult to pin down the facts surrounding his reported death.

¶7. (SBU) S. Pathmanathan, also known as KP, the LTTE's International Relations Chief, stated on TamilNet that Prabhakaran was safe and alive, but offered no details of how he knew that. Paza Nedumaran, a former Congress Party Indian MP now affiliated with a Tamil group in the Tamil Nadu region of Southern India told the media he has been in contact with Prabhakaran.

WRAP-UP OF CONFLICT

¶8. (SBU) Reports from military sources say all fighting in the former conflict zone has essentially stopped. There are a handful of LTTE cadres still remaining in the zone, but with no command and control structure. The military reports no shots fired since evening of May 18, and they were now patrolling the area with loudspeakers telling any remaining LTTE to surrender. These contacts said they would not be surprised at a revenge terrorist attack by the LTTE somewhere, but had no specific information about

any such attack.

VIJAY NAMBIAR REMAINS IN SRI LANKA;
UN SECRETARY GENERAL ARRIVES MAY 22

¶9. (SBU) UN Chief of Staff UN Resident Representative Neil Buhne reported to DCM that Vijay Nambiar, Chief of Staff to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, who was scheduled to depart Colombo the evening of May 19, will now remain until the arrival of the Secretary General on May 22 to focus on preparations. Nambiar's meetings with

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senior GSL officials have focused on the need for inclusiveness and reconciliation. The Secretary General will arrive the evening of May 22 and depart the evening of May 23. He will meet with the President and other senior officials and travel to the safe zone and Vavuniya. As of now, an overflight of, but not a ground visit to, the safe zone is planned. Co-Chair Ambassadors plus India will meet with the Secretary General on May 23.

UN/ICRC FLIGHT TO SAFE ZONE
DELAYED BY WEATHER

¶10. (SBU) A military helicopter that was to take Nambiar, an ICRC health specialist, and GSL officials on an overflight of the safe zone, with a possible landing, as well as to Vavuniya, did not depart Colombo on May 19 for weather reasons. The trip is scheduled to take place May 20.

GSL DENIES ICRC OFFER TO
ASSIST WITH DEAD AND WOUNDED

¶11. (SBU) ICRC deputy Tony Dalziel (protect) told DCM that in the last 36 hours 600-700 wounded civilians have come out of the safe zone. Some have fresh wound dressings, indicating medical care by the military somewhere en route. The ICRC believes that there are still "hundreds" of wounded in the safe zone. ICRC head of party Paul Castella (protect) reported to DCM that Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa, and field commanders have so far refused ICRC offers of assistance in treating the wounded in the safe zone, insisting the military can take care of them. Castella has also asked for ICRC access to the safe zone to oversee the identification of the dead to facilitate the notification of families. This too has been denied. DCM attempted to reach the Defense Secretary and Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa to urge support of both requests, but was unable to reach them as of 16:00. Ambassador will raise these points with both officials in his farewell calls on them tomorrow.

ARRESTS OF LTTE SURRENDEES

¶12. (SBU) ICRC reported that over the last 10 days, 1800 persons have been arrested before Omanthai, and in the transit sites. These are mainly LTTE surrendees, whose status is being determined. ICRC expects 2000 additional arrests in the coming days.

300,000 TOTAL IDPS, CASUALTIES UNKNOWN

¶13. (SBU) The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that the recent influx of IDPs brings the total of IDPs who have moved from the former conflict zone into GSL-controlled areas since late October 2007 to nearly 300,000 IDPs. This figure includes between 76,000 to 96,000 IDPs who have crossed over since May 14 and who are either still in transit or undergoing screening and registration at Omanthai.

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¶14. (SBU) OCHA reported that the GSL screened and processed an estimated 36,000 IDPs over the weekend. According to OCHA, 25,000 of the 36,000 IDPs are moving to Zone 4 of Manik Farms camp site by

May 19. The GSL will move remaining IDPs to the other zones.

¶15. (SBU) As of May 19, the number of casualties from the final several days of conflict remains uncertain due to lack of access to the former conflict area, but a military contact said roughly one in ten of the newly arriving IDPs seemed to have a bandage of some sort.

UN SUSPENDS ACTIONS AS GOVERNMENT RESTRICTS ACCESS

¶16. (SBU) As of the evening of May 18, the UN had suspended all aid operations into the Manek Farm camps due to a dispute with GSL officials over access rules. Food and water were still getting in to the IDPs, but UN and NGO personnel were prevented from driving their vehicles into the camps to oversee distribution and conditions, and to distribute non-food aid. UN security rules prevent personnel from walking in, and UN contacts were hoping to resolve the issue prior to the UN Secretary General's arrival on May 22.

CELEBRATIONS LARGELY PEACEFUL...

¶17. (SBU) Spontaneous celebrations have occurred sporadically in and around Colombo since the morning of May 18, but RSO contacts have reported very little violence associated with these gatherings, apart from a few instances of firecrackers thrown at Tamil homes or businesses. Contacts report a sense of apprehension among many Tamils in Colombo and in the Southern regions of the country, but police in these areas have reportedly heightened security to better respond to any violence that might occur.

...BUT VIOLENT PROTESTS AT UK MISSION

¶18. (SBU) Violent protests took place outside the British High Commission in Colombo on May 18th, just as news was coming in of the last day of major fighting in the North. Estimates of several hundred to 2,000 protesters gathered outside the UK's diplomatic compound, burning posters, spray-painting anti-UK messages on the compound walls, and throwing eggs and rocks into the compound, breaking several windows. An effigy of British Foreign Secretary David Miliband was burned and then tossed over the compound wall. Media reports stated the JVP, a Sinhalese nationalist party allied with the government, had organized the protest. Contacts within the High Commission said extra police did not arrive on the scene until 40 minutes after the protest began. Foreign Secretary Kohona reportedly stated that the government would not intervene, saying "This is a criminal activity. It is not the responsibility of the government to interfere in this situation."

BLAKE